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INQUIRY

INTO THE

REASONS

FOR AND AGAINST

INCLOSING

OPEN-FIELDS.

By STEPHEN ADDINGTON.

THE SECOND EDITION.

Much Food is in the Tillage of the Poor; but there is that
destroyeth for want of Judgment.

SOLOMON.

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THE

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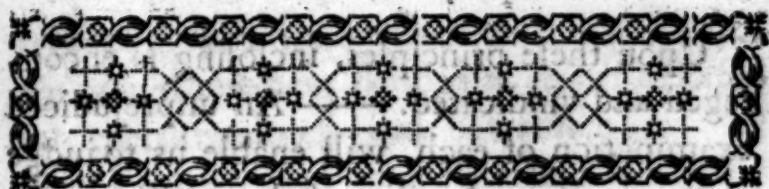
BY THE

SECRETARY

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THOUGH the author is well aware that some may think the subject of the following pages foreign to his character and office, he flatters himself that the sensible and considerate reader will admit plain truth and fact, especially on measures of public importance, by whomsoever advanced. As a man, and a Briton, he feels himself interested in every thing that appears to him of consequence to his fellow-creatures, and his countrymen--And he is the rather encouraged to venture a re-publication of the Inquiry, with his name prefixed, (tho' the former edition was anonymous) as he has found very little reason to alter his opinion, from any thing he has since met with upon the subject. He desires it may be remarked, that nothing here advanced is intended to discourage inclosing open-fields in *every* situation. He is convinced, that there are parts of the kingdom in which land may and ought to be inclosed,

(on certain conditions) for the public good ; yet as far as his observation and intelligence have reached, it has appeared to him, that encouraging the practice indiscriminately, or at all in those counties where the soil is generally rich and fruitful, though it may oblige some few, is highly injurious to nine-tenths of the inhabitants of those counties ; if not to an equal proportion of the whole kingdom. But if he is mistaken in any sentiments he has entertained, or has received either false or partial informations of what he has related, as all he wishes is, his country's good, he shall think himself happy, if any, more thoroughly acquainted with the subject, will give him, and the public, reasons for thinking more favourably of the prevailing practice of inclosing, which, as at present encouraged, appears to him highly injurious to individuals and the nation.



AN
INQUIRY, &c.

IN, REASONS URGED FOR INCLOSING OPEN-FIELDS.

“ **VERY** occupier of land may manage his stock and crop in less time, and with less trouble and expence, in inclosures, than he can in the open fields.—The land itself is then more easily improved.—And as every one has a right to make the best of his own estate,---hence, say some, proprietors of land may and ought to inclose it, in order to secure advantages to themselves and their heirs, which they could not otherwise enjoy;---especially, as every measure that enriches individuals, is for the public good.”

B

Upon

2 *An Inquiry into the Reasons*

Upon these principles, inclosing is encouraged and vindicated. — An unprejudiced examination of each, will enable us to judge of the equity and utility of the practice.

We are told, “ the landholder, with all
“ the toil and pains he is capable of, has not
“ time to make any considerable improve-
“ ments of it while it continues open.”
That is to say, he has more land for his money in the open-fields, than he can plow and manure, sow and reap, in due season ; and his crops are larger than he can get in harvest.—
A good reason for inclosing :—they will not overburden him then : However, if he is diligent, he will find both the year and the day long enough to do its work to good purpose in the open-fields.

“ Aye but, say some, he must work hard
“ if he does.” And while the industrious husbandman engages chearfully, and with good success, in the labours of the field, let him pursue them : he enjoys health—pays his rent—supports his family—and is, at the same time, procuring the staff of life for his fellow-creatures. It is time enough to consult his ease, when he complains of his labour ; and too soon then (especially in an
article

article of such importance to the public) if we would not have Britons as much despised for their weakness and cowardice, as they have been dreaded and renowned for their resolution and courage.

It has indeed been asserted, that "farmers can never be sufficiently paid for their labours in the open-fields; their expences in managing arable land in them being greater than their profits can be." And if so, they are certainly to be pitied. But the many instances in which the families of open-field farmers are not only supported, but enriched by their gains, prove the insinuation groundless. And the multitudes that always eagerly solicit to be admitted tenants to every open-field farm that is to be lett, plainly shew that they think otherwise. It is indeed very apparent, that if inclosing does free the landholder of some inconveniences, it will expose him to many more. He that could not maintain his family on an open-field farm of three or fourscore pounds a year, will have hard work to do it on one of double that rent in the new inclosures. Suppose his inclosed land continued upon tillage, he will be at less expence, undoubtedly, in getting his crops; but they will, in general, be less va-

luable there. The hedges, when grown up, are hurtful to corn : some new-inclosed lordships will have less manure, and others be obliged to fetch it farther, and at much more expence than before. And, at best, no great improvements can reasonably be expected on rich strong land that bore good crops, and kept large quantities of cattle in its open-field state. As to heaths, and light, sandy, or stony soil, there inclosing facilitates such improvements in tillage, as will do real service both to individuals and the public. But the best lands are usually laid down for pasture, though very little improvement can be made there, by such a method, except to some few proprietors who occupy their own estates. Some of these new-inclosed lordships, when laid down for grass, neither do, nor can keep the number of cattle, including cows, horses, sheep and hogs, that were bred and fed in them in their open-field state, for want of the corn, straw, &c. which they then produced. Many of the sheep and oxen, which are fed in the inclosures, will probably indeed be the more valuable ; but will the additional profits of them be sufficient to make an adequate amends for the loss of the fine crops of corn which those fields formerly bore ?—Enable the tenant to pay the enormously advanced
rents

rents demanded on the inclosure? Can he then afford to give thirty or forty shillings an acre for land, which he held before for ten or twelve? Many a poor tenant has hereby been reduced to the wretched necessity of taking land upon those hard terms, or of being thrown out of all means of supporting himself and his family: —and every man is willing to keep from starving, or a parish allowance, as long as he can: — But it is highly probable that many will be reduced to one or the other in a few years, who rent farms upon such terms as these. And as to the proprietors of land themselves, “ the improvement to them, we are told, is estimated by the new valuation of their estates, made by the commissioners who set out for inclosing, compared with the rents of the same in its open-field state; e. g. if the rents of a field before inclosure are 750 l. and on the valuation of the commissioners it will amount to 1500 l. then the field doubles its value.” In their estimation, it is true, it does; but whatever present advantages the proprietors may promise themselves from such an advance of their rents, those only are real improvements, and of lasting benefit, both to individuals and the public, in which the tenant shares his

his part with the landlord, and by which he is enabled to pay his rent, and support his family with credit. The farmers and their dependants are no inconsiderable body. If they are impoverished by these means, they must be supported by others. Perhaps what their landlords now take in this manner with one hand, they may be obliged to pay again with high interest, e'er long, with the other.

But to proceed: It has been said, "The husbandman cannot improve his land in the open-fields, if he has ever so much time and inclination to do it, but is confined to the expensive method of tillage, though the nature of the land be such as to render it convertible into good pasture, and capable of becoming equally advantageous to the proprietor with one tenth part of the expence." Be it acknowledged, that every one cannot manage his land so exactly to his mind in the open-fields, as he may do when it is inclosed: neither can every tenant in the inclosures pursue his own plan, though he thinks it ever so reasonable and advantageous. In the one situation there are difficulties from one quarter, and in the other from another: let those who have experienced

perienced both, say which are the greatest. Undoubtedly farmers are generally obliged to keep a considerable part of their open-field lands upon tillage:—they would chuse to do it:—they find their account in so doing. It is certain they are not absolutely and universally confined to this method: there are some hundred acres of grass ground enjoyed in severalty, besides commons, &c. in many open-fields of the kingdom. But what friend of the public can wish to see tillage generally disused? It is by no means a sufficient reason for laying aside the plow, that it is the most expensive method of cultivation: if it be expensive, it is indispensibly necessary to the very being of the community; and it certainly supports a much greater number than could be supported by the profits of the same land in pasture. Therein the public good is promoted by it; and it is generally for the benefit of individuals in the end, to consult that: in all cases it is their duty so to do, to the utmost of their power; and to pursue it with an assiduity proportioned to the importance of the interest depending.

Upon that principle some indeed think inclosing ought to be encouraged, as “ it is an
“ encouragement to the growth of timber,
“ which

“ which every one must acknowledge a public and national good.” And as far as inclosing does promote planting, the public is undoubtedly served by it. A trading nation, like ours, will always have occasion for timber; and our consumption of it, especially in time of war, is so great, as to make it the interest, as well as the duty, of gentlemen of fortune, to adorn and improve their estates, by planting upon them oaks, ashes, elm or firs, as may best suit their soil and situation. But were this an object of consideration with the legislature, they would probably order a certain portion of inclosed lands to be employed in planting. That very few, if any, of the proprietors of lands have this in view, in getting them inclosed, is notorious, as very little wood is planted in any of the new inclosures, more than is set in the hedge-rows. They talk much more of grazing than of planting; and look rather at present gain, than at any advantages so distant, tho’ more solid and enduring. Many a sturdy oak, and stately elm and ash, are falling yearly sacrifices to the new-inclosures, and sawn asunder for the mere temporary fence of posts and rails, while few, very few! appear, in any of them, rising up in their stead. Gentlemen of large landed estates, have undoubtedly
good

good opportunities for planting in their inclosed grounds; but such may, and do, in some instances, raise timber upon their estates in the open fields: Nor need they be apprehensive of losing the advantage of their improvements, by their being inclosed, as the claims of all lords of manors must be satisfied, before any bill for inclosing them is permitted to pass into a law.

But it must be owned, that without planting, some proprietors have advanced the yearly income of their estates greatly by inclosing them. Some that were let for only fifty or sixty pounds per ann. have been thereupon raised to a hundred: And, on the contrary, the yearly value of others has been less afterwards than before. Indeed, lords of manors, the clergy, or other impropiators of tythes, and one or two more of the principal proprietors in a parish, are generally the chief gainers. When others of less property have contributed their part of the expences for obtaining the acts of parliament, for the payment of commissioners, surveyors, qualitymen, &c. when they have raised their fences, and have suffered the ordinary deductions for tythes, roads, loss of ground, occasioned by the new fences, and failure of common, &c. &c.

it is no unusual thing to oblige those to accept of allotments of six or seven acres in the inclosures, who had nine or ten in the open-fields.

In some instances, such as have been encouraged to expect great advantages, have found themselves, though too late to their cost, mere tools, employed to sign petitions to parliament for little else than to obtain leave of the legislature to take a cow a piece from twenty persons who had only two, and to give ten more to one or two wealthy neighbours who had twenty or thirty before. Yet an ingenious writer on the subject tells us, "Inclosing is a public good, because it enriches individuals;" too hastily concluding, that "whatever enriches individuals, must be an advantage to the nation." If indeed this gentleman could make it appear, that inclosing enriches all who are any way affected by it, his reasoning would be more plausible: but can he think this, or any other measure is for the public good, that impoverishes twenty to enrich one? If he was one of the twenty, or of the ten, that were deprived of their subsistence, to make a neighbouring gentleman's estate worth three hundreds a year, that was left but for two before, he would

would have very different sentiments and feelings.

The levelling scheme is indeed ridiculous and absurd. — Attempts to reduce all mankind to the same circumstances, would be equally weak and vain. Yet the true interest of a nation, the authority of government, and the liberties and property of the subject, are all best established and promoted, by keeping things in a state in which the bulk of the people may support themselves and their families, without submitting to a mean and miserable vassalage, like that which has long made the clans in the highlands of Scotland, slaves in a land of liberty. But every thing must be sacrificed to the pleasing prospect of raising an estate of five or six hundred a year, to a thousand; and when the landed interest in one parish hear what great things their neighbours boast of doing for themselves by inclosing, they are easily persuaded to make the experiment. The young spend-thrift thinks he may then enjoy himself without restraint:—the gentleman of high taste, and small fortune, and the avaricious worldling, hug themselves in the thought of filling their purses, ennobling their heirs, and aggrandizing their memory: but either they, or their

C 2 successors

successors, may probably, e'er long, see their mistake, and be disappointed in their expectations. Let them but reckon the interest of the money sunk in the expences of inclosing, and what they pay a year more for meat, bread, malt, poultry, butter, cheese, servants wages, and various other articles of house-keeping, which are advanced greatly by inclosing good corn fields, and the monopoly of land consequent upon it, and they will find themselves little better for their improvements: Besides, they would do well to remember, that this unreasonable advance of rent in many parishes, must soon impoverish the tenant or the public: indeed there is great reason to apprehend, that it will not be long before the fatal consequences of it are felt by both. Tenants cannot support their families on the produce of lands so very high rented, but by raising the prices of their several productions to a degree intolerable to the bulk of mankind: Or if the working hand must pay a shilling for that quantity of bread, cheese, or beer, which he has bought for a groat or six-pence, the price of his labour must be raised to a degree that cannot but be injurious to a trading nation; nay, it may in time utterly ruin it. And surely, no principles, either of religion or sound policy, require

require a state to subject itself to such inconveniencies and hazards, for the sake of enriching some few, who were before richer than the generality of their neighbours. Gentlemen of large estates have it in their power already to assist the government, and be serviceable in many ways to their country, if they will exercise any œconomy in the management of their affairs; but no sum of money, or extent of land, will answer the demands of debauchees and gamesters: such are as like to outlive their fortunes when they are doubled, as if continued as they are. It is well where an increase of property falls into the hands of persons of prudence, frugality, and a public spirit; but it seldom makes the intemperate sober, or the covetous liberal: On the contrary, riches more frequently turn those into mere drones, who were before blessings to the community, by their activity and diligence; they make some little better than tyrants and bashaws, and shut up the hearts and hands of others, who, when they had less wealth, were more sensible of their dependence and connections, and could feel both for the poor and the public upon every emergency. In many instances, a sudden and large increase of fortune, only introduces such scenes of licentiousness into families, as must

must necessarily be pernicious to a neighbourhood and a nation, in proportion to the degree in which they prevail in it. The ruin hereby occasioned to some of the most flourishing and virtuous of the ancient eastern republicks, is sufficient to convince every one who is acquainted with their history, that it is a fallacious and very hurtful maxim, that
 “ That which enriches individuals, is an advantage to the public.”

Yet many will say, “ Every man has a right to make the best of his own estate, and to secure to himself and his heirs, an absolute and exclusive enjoyment of it, and of all his improvements.” Only let it be added, “ if he no way injures his neighbours, or interferes with them :” and then let us enquire whether, with such an additional clause, this will be any argument for inclosing in those parts and ways, in which it has been frequently practised. Have not many large parishes been inclosed without the unanimous consent of the persons concerned in them ; nay, contrary to the known will of several proprietors, and greatly to their disadvantage ?—A worthy member of civil society, and above all, a good christian, would certainly do nothing to promote his own private.

vate interest that may be an injury to the public. Truly admirable were the generous sentiments, *de amore Patriæ*, which glowed in the bosoms of many of the ancient inhabitants of Greece and Rome *: and still more benevolent and disinterested principles are recommended to us by the divine Author of our holy religion.

But let us examine this position a little farther.

“ The proprietor of land, we are told, has
 “ an exclusive right of enjoying his own pro-
 “ perty.” By an exclusive right is probably
 meant, in part, that which is obtained by an
 exemption from tythes, and either the stated,
 or occasional claims of lords of manors. “ Lords
 “ of manors (the gentleman who urges this
 “ argument has informed us) are lords of the
 “ soil of such land, and consequently are en-
 “ titled to all trees growing on common land,
 “ and mines in the bowels of the earth: nor
 “ can any proprietor grub up roots, or even

* Si unus quisque nostrum rapiat ad se commoda aliorum, detrahatque quod cuique possit, emolumenti sui gratiâ, societas hominum & communitas evertatur necesse est.—Illud natura non patitur ut aliorum spoliis, nostras facultates, opes, copias augeamus—Primum Justitiæ munus est, ne cui quis noceat.

Non nobis solum nati sumus sed etiam patriâ, parentibus, amicis, ceterisque hominibus; & quæ in terris gignuntur ad usum omnium hominum creantur.

“ make

“make trenches, without their leave.” If this be true, their power and claims are very extensive: and they may naturally expect a considerable share of inclosed land, as a compensation for such rights and privileges as these, before they consent to be excluded by the inclosing of their manors. But from whence must these allowances come? They are to be taken from the private proprietors, and consequently must lessen the share of every individual. As to tythes, it is certainly a convenience to be exempted from them, as they are the frequent occasions of quarrels and law-suits: yet I should think those pay dear for this convenience who allow a sixth, or even a seventh, of their fields to obtain it. But this exclusive right looks farther, *viz.* to the incroachments and trespasses that land-holders are exposed to in the open fields; and can these gentlemen make fences about their inclosures sufficiently strong and lasting to exclude every trespasser?---were the open-field parishes only ring-fenced; did each proprietor carefully mark his own land and its extremities; and would the principal land-holders in every parish unite steadily in the management of their parish-affairs, and resolutely punish, or expose such as are mean enough to stock, mow, or plow upon their
neigh-

bours, they would soon make them weary or ashamed of such dirty tricks, and every one might enjoy his property with as little injury or interruption from dishonest neighbours in the open fields as in the inclosures. And if they could likewise agree on a mutual exchange of lands, or little parcels that lie dispersed in many different parts of the field, so that each might have all his own laid together in one allotment or two in a field, making proper allowances for the difference of land, &c. they would secure the principal convenience of inclosing, without subjecting themselves, and others, to its disadvantages.

But perhaps, most who talk of an exclusive enjoyment of their land, refer chiefly to the opportunity which they obtain by inclosing, of shutting out the poor from the privileges they enjoyed in the open fields:--Besides, the benefit of gleanings, which is certainly in many fields, very considerable, and the privilege of common for cows and sheep many months of the year; they have likewise a right to cut turf, roots, and furze in some places, which must be a great advantage to those who have not money to purchase any other fuel. From these and other privileges, the poor may be, and often are, excluded by

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inclos-

inclosing: when I say they *may* be, I mean the principal proprietors have it in their power then to deprive them of these advantages--- How far it is consistent with the regard they owe either to the poor, or the community in general, to avail themselves of this exclusive right, is a further question.

The various provisions made for their support and accommodation by the laws of the Jewish Theocracy were, in this, and in every view, an excellent part of that ancient constitution, and discovered as much the wisdom, as they did the goodness of the divine Legislator :---*When ye reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field; neither shall ye gather the gleanings of your harvest: and thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God (a). Six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest, that the poor of thy people may eat; and what they leave, the beast of the field shall eat: In like manner thou shalt do with thy vineyard, and with thy olive-yard (b). And again, a general precept was given them, saying, Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine*

(a) Lev. xix. 9, 10.

(b) Exod. xxiii. 10, 11.

band from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, &c. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, (to excuse thyself) the seventh year, the year of release, is at hand, (when all the poor will be provided for) and so give him nought, &c. Thou shalt surely give him, and for this the Lord will bless thee in all thy works: for the poor shall never cease out of thy land; therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land (a). Give me to say with an ancient writer, If I have (wilfully and unfeelingly) withheld the poor from his desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; if I have seen any of the poor perish for want of cloathing, or of food, when it was in my power to relieve him:---Nay, When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy: I was a father to the poor (b). To a person of humanity and benevolence like this, one should not think it would be a perpetual mortification (as a modern writer says it is to the ge-

(a) Deut. xv. 7, 11. (b) Job xxix. and xxxi.

nerous occupier of open-field land) to see his labours shared by others who bear no part of his expence. The greater his generosity, the less his mortification most certainly would be at such sights as these. A record of high authority and merit, does honour to the memory of an eastern husbandman, who not only permitted but encouraged the hand of humble industry to follow his reapers, and pick up the gleanings of his field (a). A woe is elsewhere denounced, in that sacred volume, against those *who covet fields, and take them by violence, oppressing a man and his house. In that day shall one take up a parable, and lament, saying, we be utterly spoiled; he hath changed the portion of my people; how hath he removed it from me? turning away he hath divided our fields (b).* And blessed, say the same divine oracles, *blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble: but he that oppresseth the poor to increase his own riches, reproacheth his maker, and shall surely come to want (c).*

(a) Ruth ii. (b) Micah ii. 1—5.
(c) Prov. xiv, 31. and xxii. 16.

II. OBJECTIONS TO INCLOSING OPEN-FIELDS.

IT is an objection, if not against inclosing in general, at least against the present method of conducting it, that “the whole plan
“ is generally settled between the solicitor
“ and two or three principal proprietors,
“ without even letting the rest of them into
“ the secret, till they are called upon to sign
“ the petition. They are, in many instances,
“ not so much as indulged with the sight of
“ the bill, or the privilege of hearing it read,
“ till it is tendered to them to be signed, and
“ for that purpose they are taken separately.” These are the express words of a late writer upon the subject, who has urged this, with great justice and candour, as truly exceptionable, in a treatise, in which he has said every thing that can be said in favour of inclosing. This gentleman is well aware, that proceedings of this sort are utterly inconsistent with a maxim he had advanced before, *viz.* “that every man has a right to do what
“ he will with his own.” If that be universally acknowledged, no man, or body of men, how considerable soever, have a right to dictate to any one of their neighbours, though he has
only

only an acre in a field in which they have five hundred, whether his land should be inclosed or open : his one acre may be as important to him and his family, as their five hundred to them ; but whether it be or not, it is as really his own as theirs are ; and if he chuses to enjoy his acre, as he has been used to do, in an open-field state, who can equitably oblige him to inclose it, if every man has a right to do as he pleases with his own ? besides, as this writer very properly observes, these secret and overbearing methods “ leave
 “ proprietors exposed to be practised upon
 “ by agents, &c. many times the business is
 “ hurried on and concluded without a single meeting of all the parties concerned to
 “ consult about their common interest,
 “ though perhaps the whole property of
 “ many is at stake. The consequence
 “ of this, is, that if any of the proprietors have reasonable alterations to propose, they cannot be complied with, or
 “ they must be trusted to the honour of the solicitor to be settled in the committee,
 “ because the bill is already signed by some
 “ of the parties, and therefore it cannot be
 “ altered without a repetition of that trouble,
 “ and a considerable addition to the expence.”
 This same writer, in another part of his
 inge-

ingenious essay, has furnished a second objection to inclosing on the present plan, nearly akin to the former, and connected with it, viz. "The great power granted to the Commissioners. The method, says he, of ascertaining each proprietor's share, is left to the decision of the major part of them, in all cases which are not expressly provided for under the act, and this without any fetter or check besides their own honour and conscience, awed indeed of late with the solemnity of an oath. Hence they have an absolute power vested in them, not only to settle all disputes which arise between any of the parties concerned, whether about the quality, the survey, or the property, but also to determine, by the measure of their own abilities and judgment, the quantity and situation of the allotments, and the proportion of mounding which each proprietor shall make for his estate. This, adds our author, is perhaps, for the extent of the object, one of the greatest trusts which is ever reposed in any set of men in the kingdom." He might have said, with equal justice and propriety, it is a trust too great to be reposed in any set of men in a free state; especially, as it frequently does and will happen, that different, and
even

even the same persons, decide differently in parallel cases. "Without arraigning the motives, which might possibly be very honest, this he acknowledges a grievance to particulars." And perhaps some of the aggrieved were never consulted about the act, or they disapproved of it when they understood its tenor; but they were of the minority, and therefore obliged to submit; and they must now sit down by every determination of those who have it in their power to do as they please with them. They would not have had their estates inclosed on any consideration; but inclosed they must be; and if they refuse, or have not money to inclose them, the commissioners will inclose them, and take them into their own hands till they are reimbursed. They must have the situation and quantity they assign them. If they complain, it is to no purpose:—they have no appeal—no resource, but to sit down and make the best of a bad bargain; and that, a bargain not of their own chusing or adjusting; then, they could not reasonably complain;—but a bargain made for them by others, who have taken upon them to dispose of their property, without their consent, greatly to their dissatisfaction, and, as they apprehend at least, greatly to their disadvantage: And

— And these are free-born Britons, who boast of their liberty; yea, the gentlemen who pursue these measures, when told of the injury they do the public by inclosing, reply, in vindication of them, That every man has a right to do as he pleases with his own.

Farther, Inclosing is a disadvantage to many parts of the kingdom, as “it advances the price of their coals.” Some of the inland counties feel this inconvenience of it to such a degree already, as that they are now obliged to pay 15, 16, and 17 pence a hund. for those coals which they bought a few years ago for eleven-pence and a shilling; which, supposing the advance to be only four-pence a hundred, to a housekeeper that consumes but ten-ton of coals in the year, occasions an additional expence of three pounds six shillings and eight-pence in this single article: And it will probably be felt more and more every year in those new-inclosed counties which are at a considerable distance from the coal-pits, and where they have not the convenience of carriage by water. The inclosures render the roads almost impassable for waggons, unless in a very dry season, and that seldom happens for any length of time sufficient to make the coal-roads good (that

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are

are not turnpike) till the season advances in which those who should fetch coals, are necessarily employed in the hay-field or harvest. But this is not the only, or the principal way in which the price of coals is raised by inclosing: hereby many of the open-field farmers, who were used to bring them, are either entirely thrown out of their livings, and reduced to the necessity of leaving the country, or of becoming common labourers; or else they are obliged to enter upon small takes in the inclosures, where they have neither waggons nor horses for this, or any other business. This inconvenience is indeed rather local than national; yet it must affect many hundred families, and is a just objection against inclosing the open fields, in those neighbourhoods which are so affected by it.

The tendency of inclosing to injure the roads, has been mentioned as one way of its advancing the price of coals in many parts of the kingdom; that effect of it may be urged, in a more extensive light, as an objection to the practice in general. That this is the frequent consequence of inclosing, many a traveller has found sufficiently to his cost. As to some of the lesser roads, they are hereby rendered almost impassable; and no wonder,

as travellers that had before two or three ways from town to town, are now generally confined to one, and are obliged to drag on through such gate-ways and lanes, as render travelling not only tedious, but very fatiguing and hazardous both to man and beast. Nor indeed can good roads be expected thro' many of the new inclosures, unless at the great expence of a few, as the number of those teams is thereby considerably reduced, by the duty or hired-work of which they should be kept in repair. And even as to the large turnpike roads, the difference between those parts of them that are shut up from the sun and wind, by the hedges, and those through open fields, which have the benefit of both, is obvious to every traveller: yet every body acknowledges that good roads are not only an ornament to a country, but likewise of great importance to a trading nation. The legislature have shewn their sense of the importance of them, in the number of road-bills which they have passed of late, though as yet little is done to make them better. The turnpike roads would be preserved, if carriages upon them were only confined to weight; all restrictions with regard to the number of horses, is both injurious to the roads, and to trade, as it necessarily increases

the price of carriage in general, and that of coals in particular. Many new orders and regulations, with respect to the roads, have been inserted in all the acts of parliament for inclosing in the three or four last sessions; but all are ineffectual to keep many roads even passable in some of the new inclosures; those who are obliged to travel them, suffer great inconveniences from hence: Indeed bad roads are a nuisance to the public; and inclosing the open fields is a national disadvantage, as far as it renders the roads disagreeable and dangerous to travellers.

Inclosing is likewise thought an injury to some extensive branches of the woollen manufactory, as being a discouragement to the growth of the fine short wool, that is usually produced in the open fields. There is very little of this wool on good land in the inclosures; and as the land in most of the new-inclosed lordships in Leicestershire, is of this sort, the want of it there will be a great disadvantage to that and the adjoining county of Nottingham, in their hose-manufactory, in which many thousand tods of this sort of wool are worked up every year, and which indeed cannot be carried on without it. Inclosing must therefore at all times be hurtful

to trade in those counties; but more especially if the prices both of the wool they manufacture, and the corn by which they should be supported, are thereby advanced, at a time when the working hand is obliged to take less wages, and the manufacturer to lower the prices of his goods, for want of the usual demands for them.

And inclosing is farther detrimental to those and many other counties, by discouraging the breed of poultry, hogs, and draught-horses. To those with whom the breed of poultry is a matter of consideration, either for their flesh, eggs or feathers, inclosing must be disagreeable where the farm-yards, in which they were bred, are deprived of their usual stores, by turning the plowed fields into pasturage. But many who would not think themselves much affected by the want of chickens, geese, or turkies, may justly regret the loss of their bacon, or the enormous price at which they are obliged to buy it in such parts of the country. This has been for many years, and (perhaps) ages, the principal support of the country-people; almost the only flesh many families tasted of for eight or nine months in the year. Some hundreds of hogs were kept in open-field parishes in *Leicestershire*, which, since they

they have been inclosed, have not kept twenty: in consequence of this, such store-pigs as were bought a few years ago for four or five shillings, are now sold readily at fifteen or sixteen; nor are many to be bought at all, but out of the hands of jobbers. Every thing, from the sucking pig to the fattest bacon, is advanced in proportion: and this is the necessary consequence of laying down those fields for pastures in the inclosures, which afforded these animals a variety of sustenance when they were upon tillage and open. And as to horses, few of the heavy kind are bred or kept in the inclosures: indeed, few of any kind are bred there, in comparison of those in the open fields. They have not, it must be owned, occasion for so many themselves, nor can they raise them so cheap to sell. A sensible writer on the present state of *Great-Britain*, has indeed very justly observed, that the vast increase of horses, of late years in the kingdom, is, upon the whole, a very great nuisance, and one occasion of the advance of provisions. Yet the most useful, both for trade and the army, are the strong black horses, usually bred by the farmers in the open-fields; and inclosing will necessarily thin the number, and consequently raise the prices of these considerably in a few years.

Though

Though the prices of them must be raised, if the same numbers were bred, as the expence of feeding them in the open-fields was not much more than half so much as it will be in the inclosures; besides which, the proprietor has no advantage from their labour, having then nothing for them to do in his inclosed pastures.

Again, it may justly be alledged against inclosing good arable land, and converting it into pasture; that thereby many honest industrious tenants are turned out of farms of forty, fifty, and sixty pounds a year, and driven from employments to which they were bred up themselves, to which they have trained up their children, and by which they have supported large families with comfort and credit in their open-field state. These, if they wish, and beg leave to continue, are (some of them) rejected, because they cannot engage for large inclosed estates of eight or ten times their former rent; and as the landlord frequently forbids plowing, and even mowing there, the farmer is obliged to enter upon a business, if he has any, with which he is utterly unacquainted, and which it cannot be supposed he should be able to manage to advantage, after having spent all the former part of his life in

a very

a very different employment. Rather than run this hazard, increased as it is greatly by the advanced rent on which the new inclosures are let, many must submit to throw their families on the parish, or get what little they can towards the support of them by their hand-labour. Though few plain and poor-looking country farmers have influence enough to be continued, or admitted tenants to gentlemen of large estates in the new inclosures, if (as is generally the case) they have more wealthy or artful competitors, for reasons well known to those gentlemen's stewards.

Some indeed say, "Let the farmers starve, they are a selfish set of people that would starve the country." But outcries against whole bodies of people, are generally rash and unreasonable; they frequently betray want of judgment, or want of candour, and, very often, apparently both. The farmers are, or at least have been, a considerable body. Their employment is undoubtedly of great importance to the nation, and their convenience and advantage ought to be consulted, as far as may be consistent with the public good. If they do not part with their money in general as freely as many principal tradesmen and manufacturers

manufacturers do, one reason may be, that they have not so much of it running through their hands, and they are at more pains to get what they have. A miser is indeed despicable in any situation; yet had some in the higher classes, more of the farmer's frugality and industry, they would appear with greater honour to themselves, and advantage to their country, than many of them do at present. And it is far from being a proper method of teaching these people generosity, to deprive them of the means of subsistence.

But the disadvantages of inclosing good corn fields, great as they are to these tenant farmers, are by no means confined to them; many small proprietors of land are hereby greatly injured, and most of the labourers in every parish that is inclosed, are deprived of the means of support. There are some in almost all such open parishes, who have houses, and little parcels of land in the field, with a right of common for a cow, and three or four sheep, by the assistance of which, with the profits of a little trade, or their daily labour, they procure a very comfortable living. Their land furnishes them with wheat and barley for bread, and, in many places, with beans or peas, to feed a hog or two for meat; with the

straw they thatch their cottage, and winter their cow, which gives a breakfast and supper of milk, nine or ten months in the year, for their families. These almost universally disapprove of inclosing; and their number is considerable in many open villages; much greater, than perhaps the several constituents of our legislature themselves are generally aware of. Indeed, they cannot well know it, when these unhappy sufferers are not able to make an opposition. But were the expences of opposing these bills in the H---e of C---s less, and the prospect of success greater, perhaps the p-----t might know much more of the sense of the people on inclosing, than they do at present. It is very certain, that many proprietors in parishes that have been inclosed, disapprove of it. Some refuse to sign the petitions to p-----t, and others heartily repent of signing them, after they have been prevailed upon to do it, when they see its unhappy consequences. But the ill success that opposition to inclosing bills has generally met with, discourages some from making the attempt, and the connections of others oblige them to forbear. There are few but would submit to inconvenience and injury, rather than appear against their superiors, especially those who are in their
neigh-

neighbourhoods; and many, it is very certain, are aggrieved by inclosing, who do not openly complain. When their fields are inclosed, not a few of these small proprietors are obliged to sell their land, because they have not money to inclose it; or to borrow upon interest, on the security of their small allotments in the new inclosures, which when their interest is paid, the usual deductions made from their quantity, and the expences defrayed for fencing it, are but of little service to them; very little, in comparison of the land which they possessed in the open fields. If they continue them upon tillage, their crops are less, and much worse in those small parcels between the hedges; and if they lay them down for pasturage, they can neither have corn nor straw. And as to others who are still poorer, and whose daily bread must be earned by their daily labour, inclosing renders the case of many such in the villages, still more wretched and pitiable. The greater part of them, if not relieved by some flourishing manufactory in the neighbourhood, are hereby totally deprived of that sustenance which they procured either immediately from the productions of the corn-fields, or under those who were supported by them. It has been said indeed, that this is

not the case immediately with all; many hands will still be wanted in the inclosures that are continued upon tillage, and some in those that are laid down for pasture: though, by the way, it is always urged as an argument in favour of inclosing for pasturage, That business is easily managed there by a few;—yet when pressed with the objection, That the poor in the open-field villages are hereby deprived of that labour by which they have been supported, these same gentlemen tell us, That inclosing furnishes some with employ, which they would not otherwise have had—And so it undoubtedly does: but the hands employed by that, are few in comparison of those who are employed in the farm-yards, and open fields; and those few, but a very little time. Indeed it may be said, Their employment is more profitable, while it continues, than common labour. A man has only eight-pence a day for threshing in a barn, or following the plow; but eighteen-pence, and sometimes two shillings may be earned, by cleaving posts and rails, sinking pits, planting quicksets, &c. in the new inclosures. To which no other reply is necessary, than that which the same writer has elsewhere obligingly furnished, viz. That such is the disposition of the poor in general, that if they have

have double gains one year, they are nothing the richer for it the next. It were therefore much better for them, and better for the public, that they should have a constant round of their usual labour on moderate terms, than have much work and high wages one year or two, and nothing or little to do afterwards for years to come. And neither the contempt, nor the neglect of the poor, would be consistent with the principles of sound policy, or true religion. They are a necessary, and very useful part of the community. By whom are our manufactories to be carried on, or the labours of the house and of the field to be performed, but by the poor? From whence else are our armies and navies to be supplied?

But the poor, the tenant farmers, with their poorer dependants, and many others in the lower stations of life, suffer greatly by inclosing, as far as it is an encouragement to the monopoly of lands. The landholders (not now to mention any other) in most parishes that have been inclosed only fifteen or twenty years, are very few in comparison of the numbers who occupied them in their open-field state. It is no uncommon thing for four or five wealthy graziers to engross a large

large inclosed lordship, which was before in the hands of twenty or thirty farmers, and as many smaller tenants or proprietors. All these are hereby thrown out of their livings, with their families, and many other families, who were chiefly employed and supported by them, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, and other artificers and tradesmen, besides their own labourers and servants*.

And as this is, so likewise are many of the disadvantages of inclosing beforementioned, in a great measure, the consequence of laying down arable land for pasturage : with a view to which it is usually undertaken in *Leicestershire*, *Northamptonshire*, and other inland counties, in which the soil is, for the most part, deep and rich. Few would be fond of such large farms, even in the inclosures, if they were obliged to continue them upon tillage ; and many in these several stations and employments would then be wanted there, as well as in the open fields ; but when only ten or

* By the laws of Licinius, no Roman was to hold more than seven jugera ; and by those of Romulus, no more than two jugera of land, each containing about 240 feet in length, and 120 in breadth.——Only revive this law, (says Mr. *Sulmich*) and you will soon convert a barren desert, into a busy and crouded hive.——Both that writer and Mr. *Mura*, observe, that the increase of pasturage has the same effect with the engrossing of farms.

Dr. PRICE.

a dozen

a dozen families live upon a lordship (even including the esquire, the clergyman, all the occupiers of the land, and their shepherds, as is now the case in some) that supported upwards of a hundred, whatever it may do for them, the public must suffer by the alteration. The price of provisions is necessarily enhanced by it. The grain they produced before, is lost to the neighbourhood; and the butter and cheese, indeed all the stock that is bred or fed upon them, is sold on higher terms, when thus in the hands of a few, and those men of property, than they could be by many in less affluent circumstances: Or if they plow a few acres, they can keep their corn one month after another, for dearer times, without being obliged to thresh it out, and bring it to market, as poorer farmers must do, in order to pay their rent, and support their families. The wealthy monopolizer can sell or withhold, and go to this or that market as is most convenient and advantageous. He seldom chuses to draw a load of grain with him to market, and there expose it to sale; but when it suits him to take a ride, he can put a handful or two in his pocket by way of sample, and so keep the markets thin, and make an artificial scarcity around him, even when his barns are filled with plenty
at

at home. This is certainly one occasion of the high price of grain, and the necessary consequence of that monopoly and ingrossing of land which is encouraged by inclosing.

To put a stop to evil practices of this sort, it was wisely provided so long ago as the year 1534, "That whereas some people had gathered into few hands several farms, and great plenty of cattle, particularly sheep, whereby not only rents of lands were increased, but also tillage very much decayed, some churches and towns had been pulled down, and the price of corn, cattle, &c. excessively enhanced; therefore it was enacted, That no man should keep above 2000 sheep at one time, and not hold above two farms at once, and those to be in the parish where he lived*."

It has been said, That a noble duke, sensible of the injury hereby done to the community, has divided some of his large grazing-farms into smaller allotments, to be lett to a greater number of tenants, with a liberty of plowing certain proportions yearly of each, to render them of more extensive advantage. This, perhaps, may give him or his steward

* See Dr. Price's Observations, page 359.

the trouble of signing twenty or thirty receipts instead of five or six; and his grace will probably have so many more tenants once a year at his table: but he has an ample recompence, if not in the blessings of so many more upon his head, at least in the pleasing reflections of his own mind on a conduct that ennobles him more than his high birth, and large estates, and that makes him a credit and a blessing to his country, as well as an example worthy the imitation of all the nobility and gentry in the kingdom.

Again, It is urged as another objection to inclosing on the plan upon which it is now generally pursued, that thereby the landed interest of the clergy is greatly increased; one seventh or eighth part of the kingdom being hereby put into their hands, free of all expence, which, added to other ecclesiastical revenues, must undoubtedly make them a very considerable body. One design of the statute of Mortmain seems to have been, to prevent an undue increase of the landed-interest of the church, as what would be often injurious to individuals, and generally so to the public. But it is increased more by inclosing-bills in one year, than it would probably be in fifty by charitable legacies. It

will be said, perhaps, that this land is only granted to the clergy in lieu of their tythes, to which they had a legal right before; and undoubtedly every good minister has not only a legal, but a natural right to a living from his parish. But there is an important difference to a nation between allowing the clergy a share of the products of the land, and giving them the land itself, especially a seventh or eighth of the one, instead of a tenth of the other.

To proceed: Another objection against inclosing, is, its apparent tendency to thin the country villages of inhabitants, and depopulate the nation in general. As far as it encourages the engrossing and monopolizing of land, it must necessarily send the inhabitants at least out of the villages. Lesser farmers, labourers, &c. are thereby deprived of their employments; and if they are not immediately forced out of their houses, they are left to starve in them. But they must leave them soon; want of food, and indeed want of comfortable shelter (in such miserable ruinous cottages as those in the inclosures become, in a little time) oblige them to flee. Their landlords in general are glad to get rid of them, that they may not become burdensome, and

and to save themselves the expences of repairing their old houses *. In the counties of *Leicester* and *Northampton*, where inclosing has lately prevailed, the decrease of inhabitants in almost all the inclosed villages, in which they have no considerable manufactory, is obvious enough to be remarked by every one that knew their state twenty or thirty years ago, and sees them now; and that to a degree that cannot but give every true friend of his country a most sensible concern. The ruins of former dwelling-houses, barns, stables, &c. shew every one who passes thro' them, that they were once much more extensive, and better inhabited: and if there are any left in them or in the neighbourhoods, who remember such, before their inclosing, as were inclosed twenty or thirty years ago, let them say if they have not been declining from thence. They have known upwards of an hundred houses and families in some open-field villages, that have since dwindled

* In the year 1759, (says Dr. Price) the number of houses in England and Wales, was 986,482; in 1766, it was reduced to 980,692;—so that in those seven years, the number of houses was reduced 5790;—which waste has, most unhappily for the nation, fallen upon the cottages, the inhabitants of which, when thrown down or left to fall, fly from the villages to London, and other large towns, there to be corrupted, and perish.

to eight or ten; and five or six hundred inhabitants, where there are not now more than forty or fifty; a plain proof this, that inclosing depopulates the country. But this we are told it may do, and the nation in general be as populous as ever. Nay, some have asserted, That Britain has a greater number of inhabitants than it had before inclosing so much prevailed. The demand for all sorts of provisions, we are told, is greater of late than in former years, and therefore there must be more to consume them. But the number of cattle, and the vast quantities of corn which have been lately exported; the large demands of the distillery, and the prodigious increase of horses among us, together with the enormous extravagance and licentiousness which is growing yearly among all ranks of people; all these things concurring, must necessarily occasion a larger demand for provisions of all sorts, than there was when little was sent abroad, and when that which we had at home, was managed with more discretion and frugality. Little regard is to be paid to the argument for supposing a national increase, that is taken from the numbers that were in our fleets and armies the last war, and that now stand ready to enter them again, as they are evidently driven thither
for

for want of employment, both in the manufactories, and all those new-inclosed parishes in which their tillage-land has been laid down for pasture.

But the enormous increase of the poor's rates, complained of in almost every parish, is thought another proof, that the nation is more populous than it was years ago. This indeed proves, that the number of the poor is increased; or, at least, that their maintenance is now more expensive than formerly; and perhaps both may be inferred from it; but it can never prove that the whole nation is increasing. However, as far as the fact is admitted, it must convince us of the impropriety of a measure like that of inclosing, which tends both to swell the number and necessities of the poor, by depriving them of the subsistence which vast numbers of them obtained by their labour in open-field parishes, without being burthensome to them or any others.

But without resting the merits of the question concerning the increase or decrease of the inhabitants of *Britain*, on these or any other speculations and conjectures, a sensible inquirer into the present state of *Great Britain*, &c.

&c. with regard to agriculture, population, &c. (who seems to have had his intelligence from very good authority) has informed us, that we are reduced from eight to six millions; and, that notwithstanding the increase in many larger towns, it is computed there is a decrease of 314,373 houses within the last seventy years*. Indeed, a general depopulation is the natural, and almost necessary consequence of inclosing. Many are obliged to seek settlements and employments in foreign countries, which they are hereby deprived of in their own: A double disadvantage this to *Britain*; as she is thus weakening and impoverishing herself, to strengthen and enrich not only her distant colonies, but often likewise her rivals in trade, and even her avowed enemies. Besides, those in the lower classes of the people, who are at all thoughtful, may well be afraid of adding to their expences and cares, by marrying at a time when measures are pursuing to deprive them of a maintenance in almost every situation. They can hardly secure a dwelling, and have not the least prospect, either of trade or labour, in many

* Dr. Price's account of the decrease of houses from 1759 to 1766, was mentioned above; and his estimate of the inhabitants of England and Wales, is, that since the year 1690, they have decreased a million and half.

of the inclosed villages. And as to the market towns, most of them have more inhabitants already than they can well support; for drapers, grocers, butchers, indeed tradesmen and manufacturers of all sorts, as well as inn-keepers, &c. are rendered less capable of maintaining their poor, as they are greatly injured by the decrease of the villages about them. Many families, which have been good customers to them for a number of years, are now driven away, and the few that remain, have little money to lay out, either for cloaths or victuals: In consequence of this, where their markets were formerly crowded, you will have only here and there a stall, and now and then a customer. Indeed market-towns cannot be supported, except those which have a good manufactory, or a large thoroughfare; for such as depended chiefly on their markets (of which there are great numbers) must soon be entirely ruined. And as to those families that have been settled in villages, and are by this means driven out of them into the market-towns, they generally exchange both situations and employments much to their disadvantage. If wages are higher there, they have a new business to learn, and are at additional expences that are often more than an equivalent for the increase of their wages:

Besides,

Besides, the very change of employment proves injurious to the health of many; and still more the dirty, confined parts of the larger towns, in which the poor are most frequently situated: A disadvantage this, by which those must be most sensibly affected, who are driven thither from the pure air, and more active employments of the country. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that the poor are thereby forced into situations, in which they are, not only more exposed to destructive pestilential diseases, but are likewise most liable to contract the habits of indolence and debauchery, which tend to enervate the human frame, and entail languishing and mortal diseases upon themselves and their posterity*. But take it for granted, that *Britain* is growing more populous; yet where is the policy or prudence of pushing measures to make both labour and provisions scarce, if the occasions for both are yearly increasing?

* The ingenious Dr. *Price*, in his *Observations on Revolutionary Payments*, among many other remarks on population, (from p. 167, to 221, 2d edit.) informs us, that fewer persons attain to great ages in London, than in most other places; and that half the number born there, die under 3 years old: and has plainly proved, by incontestible facts, that such measures as tend to drive the inhabitants of the villages into larger towns, and discourage agriculture, are ruinous to a state, both by lessening the plenty, and raising the price of the means of subsistence; and by diminishing the number of its inhabitants, on the prosperity, healthiness, and increase of which, its safety depends.

Besides,

Besides, Inclosing must certainly deprive the poor of work, and raise the price of all sorts of grain, as great part of the best tillage land is laid down for pasturage soon after it is inclosed, in many parts of the kingdom. Inclose (as was before observed) only light, sandy, and stony soil, and *there* such improvements might be made, as would be an advantage to individuals, and for the public good. Every well-wisher to his country would rejoice to see barren heaths inclosed, making proper allowances to the poor for the privileges they enjoyed upon them: Many such there are in the kingdom, that, in their present state, yield very little advantage to any, which would produce large quantities of corn, under proper management. *There*, industry would be encouraged by inclosing, the poor employed, population promoted, and agriculture greatly increased;—and agriculture ought certainly to increase with a growing trade, or it will not grow long; nay, it cannot be supported among us. The poor, by whom our goods are manufactured, must starve without it, or buy their provisions at such advanced prices, as will oblige them to raise the price of their labour: but if the servant's wages are raised, the master's goods must be proportionably advanced, or he must suffer for it;

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and suffer he may, for who of his neighbours can afford to give him more, while they are all obliged to give two-pence for a loaf, that, not long ago, they could buy for a penny? And if the manufacturer either makes worse goods, or raises their prices, his orders will soon fail from abroad, and he will find himself under-sold at all foreign markets. Wise and salutary is the old maxim of an eastern monarch, That much food is in the tillage of the poor: but that of a modern writer is entirely mistaken and ill-grounded, that “In-
“ closing, by sending many hands into trade,
“ must lower the prices of our manufacto-
“ ries.” It has sent many hands into trade already, but has that lowered the prices of the manufactories? That some of them are lowered is certain, but it is from a very different cause, *viz.* The want of orders; and that has been just accounted for. There are already more hands in almost all the manufacturing towns in the kingdom than they can employ; and every idle hand in a parish, is a burden and a nuisance. Set the plow a going, and all will have, at the same time, employment and bread; which all ought to have, both for their own sakes, and for the sake of the community. Instead of that, many lordships have not fifty acres plowed yearly since they were
were

were inclosed, in which fifteen hundred, or at least a thousand, were plowed before; and scarce an ear of corn is now to be seen, in some that bore hundreds of quarters.

The consequences of this are felt severely already in the inland counties; so severely in *Northamptonshire* and *Leicestershire*, as that worse wheat has lately been sold there on an average at 7s. and seven and six-pence the *Winchester* bushel, for many months together, than they have been used to buy at three and six-pence and four shillings; and they have given five shillings and five and six-pence for malt, that has been usually bought there at little more than half a crown. In these counties inclosing has greatly prevailed, and most of their new-inclosed lordships are laid down for pasturage. Thus they suffer for it! But the nation in general does and must feel the effects of this. It having been observed, in *Henry* the 8th's time, " That there was
" a great decay of tillage and husbandry, occasioned by the many inclosures made by
" the nobility and gentry, who within fifty
" years had turned most of their lands into
" pasture, and kept them in their own hands,
" from whence, among other inconveniencies,
" it followed, that the number of husband-

“ men, and persons capable of defending the
“ country, was very much lessened; many
“ towns and villages were depopulated; and
“ the prices of wool and meat were very
“ much enhanced, as being engrossed by per-
“ sons who were not obliged to sell: To re-
“ medy all this, the King revived the statutes
“ made against inclosures, and issued out his
“ commissions to justices and other magi-
“ strates, to see them put into execution.”—

Had any measures of that sort been pursued, or a stop put to inclosing a few years ago, we should never have been obliged to send our money into other nations, for what our own fields (under the blessing of providence) would yield us in great abundance, and on much lower terms, if they were properly cultivated.

France, our natural competitor in trade, is doing her utmost to under-sell us at all foreign markets; she has it already in her power so to do; nay, it is said, actually does twenty and even thirty per cent. in some extensive articles. And what enables the *French* to under-sell us? in a great measure, no doubt, the cheapness of their provisions; and, as the necessary consequence of that, the low prices of their labour. Perhaps it may likewise, e'er long, become matter of serious consideration to *Britain*, that by pursuing measures that have
such

such a tendency as these, she is enabling her *American* colonies not only to do without her manufactories (of which they have for many years taken off very large quantities) but even to rival her in trade; as she is obliging her working hands to seek that employment and support there, which the neglect of agriculture, and the decay of trade, deny them in their native country.

But we are often told, "That things will naturally come about again in time: when the landholders find that tillage answers better than pasturage, they will return to the plow." Thanks to the artful surgeon for an opiate so seasonably administered, to lull the poor patient into insensibility, or a pleasing delirium, while, more for his own sake than the poor sufferers, he makes his experiments, and performs his most dangerous operations. Those that talk thus, do not indeed pretend to foresee the time of this happy revolution. If it would not answer the landholders end to plow when corn was so scarce and dear as it has been of late, when will it? Yet are many of them as eager to convert the plowed fields into grass-grounds, as they could be, if wheat sold only at half a crown, and barley at eighteen-pence a bushel. Few tenants

nants in the new inclosures, where the land is good, are permitted to plow, though they should think it would be ever so much to their advantage, or for the public good: And why? truly, for fear they should impoverish the land. 'Tis pity these Gentlemen, who are so very much afraid of having part of their land impoverished, are in no manner of concern at the thought of impoverishing great part of the nation. Certainly they have no great occasion to be in such pain about their land; for many soils are greatly improved by being broke up, and kept a few years upon tillage; and there are few that would receive any injury by it, if they were properly managed.

However, to silence every complaint of this sort, we are kindly assured, that “ if the
 “ prices of wheat, barley, rye, beans, &c.
 “ are advanced by inclosing, it must necessarily lower the price of meat, as well as of
 “ wool and leather for cloathing.” But are these things, is any one of them, growing cheaper in those parts of the country where inclosing prevails most? Nay, are not all dearer? And will not, must not, every thing be dearer, that is bought out of those grounds which inclosing has raised to such enormous rents? The tenant must either sell the products of them for more than double their
 former

former value, and for three times more than the greater part of the consumers can afford to give for them, or he must starve, and be turned out of his living, as unable to pay his rent: It is easy to suppose which of the two most tenants would prefer. It would not indeed be in the power of any two or three, or more in a neighbourhood, by any combination, to keep up the prices of their living stock a considerable time, if store cattle were plentiful and cheap; but these have almost doubled their prices within a few years. It will be asked, perhaps, Whence is that? Whence but, in part, from the extraordinary demands for them to stock the new inclosures that are turned into pasturage? And partly through inclosing other parts of the country, especially in the north, where great numbers of horned cattle were bred cheap, and from whence they might consequently be sold so. Those whose land is hereupon advanced from five to twenty shillings an acre, can breed but few, or they must sell them at advanced prices; yet there is, upon the whole, reason to hope, if our seasons are at all healthy and fruitful, that meat will be cheaper in a few years, unless the vilest and most unlawful methods are made use of to prevent it. But if the graziers, who have
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bought in their stock at enormous prices, should be obliged to sell their cattle, after eight or ten months keeping, for less than they gave for them, few of them would relish this effect of inclosing, nor could some of them very well bear it : And their landlords will then see how much better they are in the end, for such improvements of their estates, as render their tenants incapable of paying their rent.

Upon the whole, Inclosing good arable land is like to lessen the public revenue, and at the same time to be attended with those consequences that must necessarily diffuse a spirit of dissatisfaction in the kingdom, in proportion to the degree in which they are felt among us. Those of our nobility and gentry who have promoted it, cannot indeed reasonably complain of a scheme of their own ; but others will complain, who have been obliged to submit to it, and the many thousands that have been one way or other impoverished by it. The sense of by far the greater part of the nation, with regard to inclosing, is well known ; and it will be well if the consequences of opposing the general voice of the people be not worse in some future crisis than many are at present aware of. Far
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be it from any true friend of Liberty, or of *Britain*, to say any thing that should encourage a tumultuous spirit. That nation, or neighbourhood, must certainly be miserable, that is governed by a mob: And the poor wretches themselves, who are disposed to pursue such measures, to obtain a redress of their grievances, would do well to consider, that they are thereby generally increasing the evils they complain of, and are taking the most direct method to involve themselves and their families in ruin. Indeed, popular clamours are often ill-grounded, and the poor are therein made, in many instances, the miserable tools of ill-designing and interested men: Yet it perhaps deserves to be considered, whether, far from acting on the principles of true policy, we are not most effectually gratifying the worst enemies of the government, and of the protestant interest in *Britain*, by eagerly pursuing those measures which must be pushed down the people's throats with a bayonet. *Vox populi, vox Dei*, is a maxim that may undoubtedly be overstrained and perverted, but it is a maxim that ought not, by any means, to be universally rejected with contempt. Certainly no wise man will despise the voice of the people, because it is theirs: As far as it is consistent with the principles of sound

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reason,

reason, it ought to be regarded, and regarded (in a sense) as the voice of GOD. Perhaps our dear-bought experience may convince us, in a little time, that their objections to inclosing have been solid and rational, and their apprehensions from it founded on a thorough acquaintance with the nature of the scheme, notwithstanding all the contempt with which some of its warm advocates have affected to treat them. Upon the whole, it is submitted to the unprejudiced and disinterested reader, whether the following inferences are not easily deducible from an impartial review of the subject, *viz.*

That agriculture should be generally and constantly encouraged; whether by public premiums, or in other ways, is submitted to the superior wisdom of the Legislature.

That the land-holders should be obliged to keep a certain number of acres yearly upon tillage, in every inclosed lordship.

That oxen should be more generally used in tilling the land, whose flesh will furnish us with meat, while they procure us food by their labour.

That

That public provision should be made to keep up houses for the poor in inclosed parishes.

That no person, or number of persons in combination, should be permitted to hold above a certain number of acres in a parish, or within a limited number of miles.

That some more effectual measures should be pursued, to mend the roads in the inclosures, and to keep them good; especially in those parts of the country, where the soil is rich and deep, in which the roads will otherwise be soon not only hazardous, but impassable.

That only light, shallow, stony, or sandy soil is to be improved by inclosing; and that such land as is capable of bearing good crops of grass and corn, in its open-field state, ought never to be inclosed at all.

That it nearly concerns the inhabitants, in such parts of the country, to apply to their representatives in parliament, to exert all their influence, in order to prevent every bill for inclosing such land, from passing into a law, as more immediately ruinous to the trades-

60 *An Inquiry into the Reasons, &c.*

men, mechanics, farmers, labourers, and the poor in general, in such neighbourhoods; and, in the end, injurious to the nation.

And, in fine, that a principle of benevolence, and true policy, would strongly recommend every measure, that may furnish all the lower classes of the people with the means of support in the country; to encourage such of them to return thither as have been driven into cities and large towns for subsistence; and, for that purpose, in all parts of the kingdom, where their open-fields produce good crops of grain, to put a stop to the pernicious practice of inclosing.

T H E E N D.

